



No. 866	AUTHOR: Kristen Chodachek, Waterfowl Research Biologist TITLE: Light Goose Conservation Order in Indiana	DATE 7/13/04
-------------------	---	------------------------

Abstract: *The light goose conservation order was offered statewide to residents and non-residents from 1 February through 31 March 2003. A total of 56 individuals obtained a free conservation order permit and 49 responded to the survey card. An estimated 56.0 (± 5.6) participants pursued light geese for a total of 145.6 (± 9.1) days and harvested an estimated 16.5 (± 3.1) light geese. Approximately 2.8 (± 2.8) and 29.6 (± 9.0) participants reported that they used electronic calls and/or unplugged shotguns, respectively. An estimated 17.8 (± 7.0) participants pursued geese one-half hour after sunset but did not harvest any geese. Efforts to take light geese occurred in 13 counties, 3 in which harvest occurred. Of the hunters surveyed, 44.9% indicated they would participate in a conservation order in Indiana if it was available in the future.*

HISTORY: The mid-continent light goose population (MCLG), which includes lesser snow geese (*Anser caerulescens caerulescens*) and Ross' geese (*A. rossii*), has experienced high population levels to the extent that they have become seriously injurious to their arctic and subarctic breeding grounds. As a result, former President Bill Clinton signed the Arctic Tundra Habitat Emergency Conservation Act on November 24, 1999 authorizing additional regulations to reduce the MCLG population through a conservation order (CO).

REGULATIONS: The light goose CO was made available statewide in Indiana to residents and non-residents from 1 February to 31 March 2003. Shooting hours were from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. There were no daily bag or possession limits. Unplugged shotguns and electronic calling devices were legal. All participants were subject to similar regulations applied during the regular waterfowl season (i.e., Indiana hunting license, state duck stamp), except that registration with the H.I.P program was not required nor was a Federal duck stamp. In addition to licensing requirements, participants were required to obtain a free permit with an attached pre-addressed, postage paid survey card.

RESULTS: A total of 56 individuals obtained free permits and 48 useable survey cards were returned (87.5% response rate). An estimated 56.0 (± 5.6) participants pursued light geese for a total of 145.6 (± 9.1) days in Indiana from 1 February to 31 March 2003 and harvested an estimated 16.5 (± 3.1) light geese. Approximately 2.8 (± 2.8) and 29.6 (± 9.0) participants reported that they used electronic calls and/or unplugged shotguns, respectively. An estimated 17.8 (± 7.0) participants pursued geese one-half hour after sunset but did not harvest any geese. Efforts to take light geese occurred in 13 counties (Clark, Daviess, Fountain, Gibson, Knox, LaPorte, Marshall, Perry, Pike, Porter, Posey, Spencer, and Wabash), 3 in which harvest occurred (Table 1). Harvest occurred in 1 new county in 2003 as compared to 2002 (Table 2). Of the hunters surveyed, 44.9% indicated they would participate in a conservation order in Indiana if it was available in the future.

DISCUSSION: The harvest of light geese during the conservation period in Indiana was minimal, however up until 2003 the harvest had continued to increase (27 in 2000, 45 in 2001, and 168 in 2002). The most common comments from participants were not knowing where to hunt and having limited opportunity on light geese. It is known that Indiana is on the fringe of the migratory route for MCLG. However, harvest of light geese during the CO, albeit small, provides additional opportunities for Indiana waterfowlers. Despite the small harvest and minimal participation, 44.9% of the hunters who responded to the survey indicated they would participate in a conservation order in Indiana if it was offered in the future.

Table 1. Reported^a harvest of light geese by county during the snow goose conservation order in Indiana, 2003.

County	1 Feb. - 13 Feb.	14 Feb. - 27 Feb.	28 Feb. - 12 Mar.	13 Mar. - 31 Mar.
Knox	1	2	0	2
LaPorte	0	0	6	0
Posey	0	0	0	2

Table 2. Reported^a harvest of light geese by county during the snow goose conservation order in Indiana, 2002.

County	1 Feb. - 13 Feb.	14 Feb. - 27 Feb.	28 Feb. - 12 Mar.	13 Mar. - 31 Mar.
Daviess	13	20	6	0
Gibson	35	33	15	1
Knox	13	3	1	1
Monroe	0	0	2	0
Posey	4	0	0	2
Sullivan	0	2	0	0
Unknown	8	11	0	14

^a Reflects distribution of reported (not estimated) harvest of light geese.

These management and research notes are issued periodically to provide a quick source of information on wildlife surveys and investigations, and various wildlife programs prior to more formal reports. Any information provided is subject to further analysis and therefore is not for publication without permission.

